ASHPIT Bulletin
Focus on Public Engagement in Policy

Welcome!

Welcome to the very first newsletter for ASHPIT, the Arts, Social Sciences and Humanities Policy & Practice Implementation Think Tank!
The ASHPIT newsletters will be an important part of the process of reporting the project's progress back to VITAE, but equally importantly they are also intended to bring the headlines of our Think Tank days to all the members of the our mailing list. In them, you can expect to find summaries of key points of policy relating to the theme of the previous Think Tank day (the first of which took place on the 13th December 2010 at the University of Nottingham), and of the presentations given and the key points raised during group discussions at those events. We'll bring you news of upcoming Think Tank days and of opportunities for potential new projects arising from ASHPIT.
In this first newsletter, we've also included some general information about ASHPIT, but if you would like to know more about the project, please feel free to contact us at: ashpit@nottingham.ac.uk

How does ASHPIT work?

ASHPIT is a group of researcher developers with responsibility for supporting students in the Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences. It is a complementary addition to the existing Vitae regional hub model, enhancing the ability of researcher developers to deliver innovative discipline-appropriate support to researchers in the Arts, Social Science and Humanities (ASH). It aims to make the **best use of limited resources** and funding and is a way to **embed and sustain best practice** that has been developed over the course of Roberts Funding in institutions across the UK. The Think Tank supports capacity-building since

sharing resources means that institutions will be able to retain more than just the core functions that the current funding climate might otherwise dictate. Over the coming two years, ASHPIT will be a focus for ideas generation in key, policy-informed areas of researcher development such as **public engagement, entrepreneurship, impact and evaluation, career development, sustainability and researcher-led initiatives.** It will also coordinate the design and delivery of five innovative, collaboratively-developed training interventions which will be tailored to postgraduates in the ASH disciplines and available online via the vitae website.
Attending a think tank day

will give you the opportunity to learn from each other about best practice in your field and to hear first-hand about the latest policy developments, documents and reports relating to ASH researcher development, so please do consider joining us at future events.
You can find lots more information about the project aims and objectives on our blog: http://ashpit.wordpress.com

If you'd like to receive automatic notifications of updates to the blog, please subscribe using the "Sign me up!" button on the right-hand side of the homepage.

The next think tank day will take place on **Friday 15th April** at the **University of Oxford** and will focus on the theme of **Entrepreneurship**. If you would like to attend, please send an email registering your interest to: ashpit@nottingham.ac.uk by Friday 25th February.
It would be useful to know in advance what ASHPIT members are doing in the field of Entrepreneurship training. Please do **e-mail and let us know.**

Inside this issue:

> *"The policy days will ensure that the support we provide for postgraduates and research staff in skills development is relevant to both their needs and the needs of employers."*

Aims of the Policy Review

The policy review will form an important part of each Think Tank day. Its purpose is to: help respond to the strategic aims of our organisations; prove the relevance of the work we do; help us write successful funding bids for extended/enhanced activity; and ensure that the support we provide for postgraduates and research staff in skills development is relevant to both their needs and the needs of employers. Many of us struggle to find time to keep up to date with current policy, even though we know that it can support and inform the work we do in positive ways. These sessions aim to inform evidence-based practice by looking at how key themes are conceptualised and discussed in government policy documents (particularly Department for Business, Innovation and Skills), and by research councils (primarily AHRC and ESRC, but also RCUK) and Vitae.

Why Public Engagement?

Public engagement is described in the new National Coordinating Centre for Public Engagement (NCCPE) manifesto as "the many ways in which higher education institutions and their staff and students can connect and share their work with the public". Recently, public engagement has moved towards the top of the agendas of government ministers and research councils alike. In his speech to the 2010 Universities UK Annual Conference in September last year, David Willets (Minister of State for Universities and Science) spoke of public engagement as "a contribution to society far broader than research and one which must not be lost." A key recommendation of the REF Impact Pilot report (November 2010) was that public engagement should be counted towards the impact component for the purposes of the 2014 REF. The following month, the Concordat for Engaging the Public with Research was published by RCUK and the NCCPE launched its manifesto for Public Engagement. Both talk unambiguously about the importance - and also the challenges - of embedding public engagement activities, particularly in terms of developing their reach, enhancing their quality, making them more joined up and evaluating them more comprehensively. They make specific mention of the potential role of postgraduate researchers in public engagement and use them as examples of best practice. Good reason then, to think about how we respond to this new policy focus in our practice and how public engagement sits in our own researcher development programmes.

What are we doing already and what is yet to be done?

In his keynote presentation at the first think tank day , Paul Manners (Director of NCCPE) described public engagement as taking place in a piecemeal way across most institutions, with evidence often being hard to capture. Postgraduate volunteering in schools is certainly commonly facilitated by Widening Participation and Outreach teams, although not necessarily via Graduate School researcher development initiatives. Communication skills, and the other key skills (media, project management, networking and so on) highlighted by NCCPE as defining an engaging researcher are a mainstay of most postgraduate training programmes. However, evidence of researcher development activity which brings relevant training and *practical public engagement opportunities* together is harder to find. This is particularly the case in the Arts, Humanities & Social Sciences which do not, on the whole, benefit from the same availability of funding opportunities as science outreach programmes. Researchers in Residence stands out as a rare example of a public engagement programme which is open to all disciplines and which offers training and practical experience of volunteering in schools. There are, it seems, two options currently favoured by researcher developers looking to combine skills development and public engagement: either schools-based activities like Researchers in Residence, or the nationwide University Researcher Showcase,

which builds on the academic conference poster session format favoured by scientists, engineers and some social scientists. These kinds of activities are popular and successful, although the Faculties of Arts & Humanities have sometimes dragged their feet when it comes to engaging with the poster format. But can they miss the true potential for skills development by too narrowly defining 'public', or by erring towards a "broadcast" mode of engagement which focuses on knowledge transfer rather than knowledge exchange?

> *"Recent policy developments in the new Researcher Development Framework integrate engagement, influence and impact into a complete skills package"*

Why Public Engagement and Skills Development?

Whilst the NCCPE manifesto definition of public engagement talks about 'sharing work' (i.e. research outcomes) as one purpose of public engagement activity, it goes on to state that 'done well, it [public engagement] generates mutual benefit, with all parties learning from each other through sharing knowledge, expertise and skills.' This broader focus on skills in public engagement seems to play to recent policy developments in the new Researcher Development Framework which integrates engagement, influence and impact into a complete skills package describing the 'knowledge, behaviours and attributes of effective and highly skilled researchers.' By contrast, these skills were not mentioned explicitly — and certainly not grouped together or given such prominence — in its predecessor, the Joint Skills Statement. *How are we responding to this shift in policy focus? How might we respond to it in the future?*

Public Engagement and Skills Development in practice

> *"...what might previously have been a simple show and tell now offers the opportunity for the development of a host of employer-friendly skills."*

Public Engagement in Practice – Two Case Studies from the Universities of Manchester and Southampton During the afternoon of the first Think Tank day, colleagues from the Universities of Manchester and Southampton gave short presentations of some of their public engagement projects with which they had recently been involved. *Dr. Claire Stock spoke to us about how the University of Manchester's poster competition has evolved into an interactive showcase, with postgraduate researchers required to identify their own potential audiences and invite them to the event.* This has encouraged researchers to think about the impact and potential of non-academic applications of their work, as well as how they might make their research interesting to people outside of their discipline. *We also heard from Dr Will May and Dr Laurie Stras, who talked about how the University of Southampton is seeking to embed public engagement throughout their postgraduate provision in Humanities.* They gave the example of their Creative Writing MA, which requires students to edit, publish and sell an anthology as part of their final project. Formerly limited to an on-campus activity, these processes have now been linked with the New Forest Festival, and this year's anthology will be launched alongside a series of literary events organised by postgraduates working with the local community. (Both of these case studies are described more fully on page 5).

It was interesting to note that in both these cases, steps had been taken towards broadening the potential for postgraduate participants to develop a range of skills either by adapting existing models of public engagement (as in the University of Manchester's Researcher Showcase) or by creating their own (as in Dr May and Dr Stras' creation of new links between the Creative Writing MA and New Forest Festival). **Both examples engage with the definition of public engagement as a relationship of mutual benefit, an opportunity for learning by all parties involved. As such, their focus is not exclusively on strong research outcomes, but also on the opportunities for skills development.**

Both of these projects are starting to refocus public engagement activity on the wider skills agenda by targeting it at potential employers, thereby creating the

opportunity for longer-term relationships to grow. Relationships that last over a period of months give greater scope for development of the kinds of leadership and management skills which recent reports by the Council for Industry and Higher Education (CIHE) have highlighted as lacking in postgraduates. As a result, what might previously have been a simple *show and tell* now offers the opportunity for the development of a host of employer-friendly skills including marketing, interpersonal communication, project management, commercial and audience awareness.
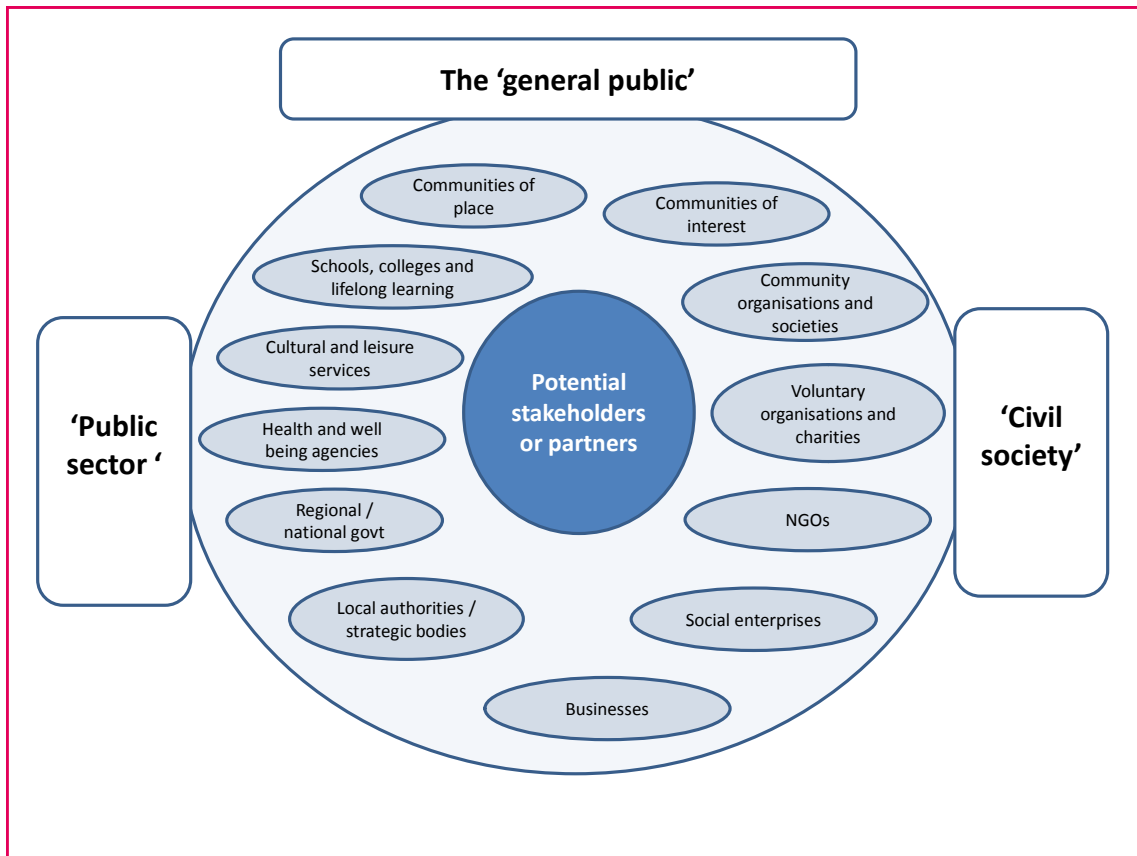
You can find information about an additional case study of the University of Nottingham's work with external partners in providing PGRs with creative, work-based/experiential learning opportunities in the ASHPIT blog: http://ashpit.wordpress.com

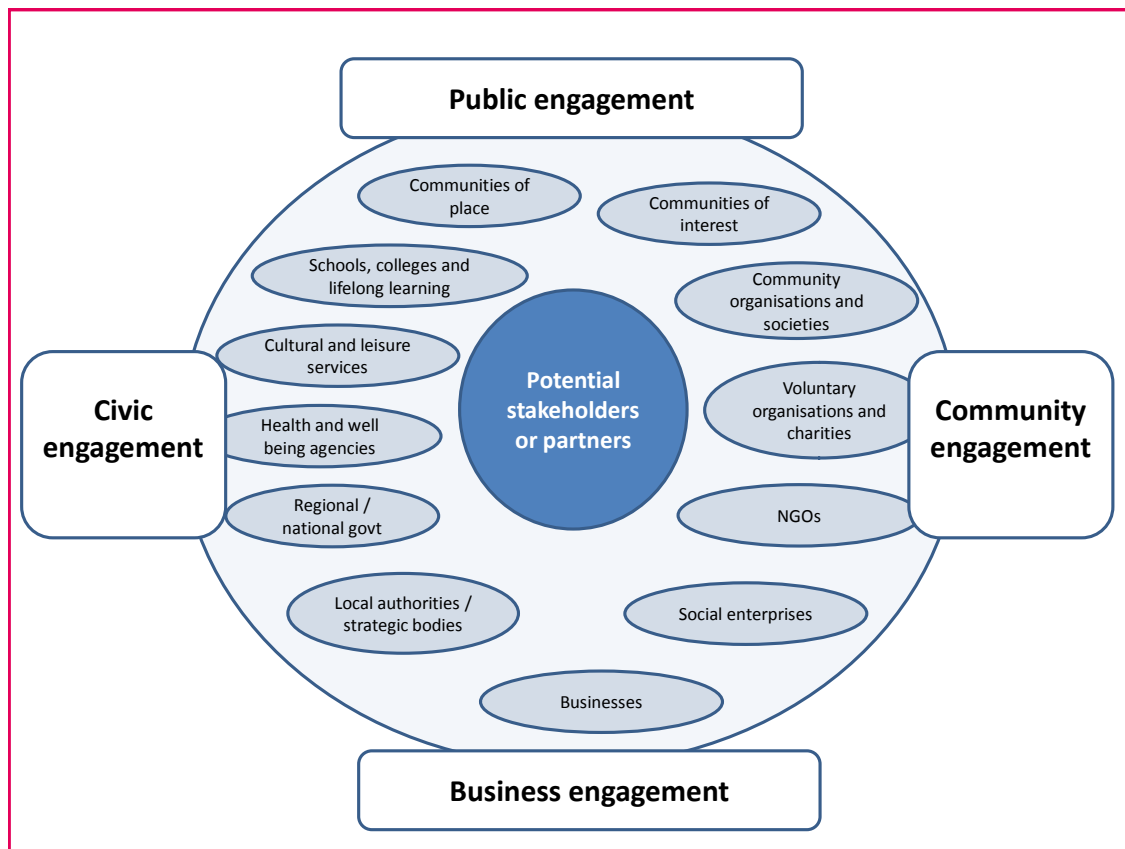## Key Note: "What is Public Engagement, Why Does it Matter, and What Can Universities do to Support it Better?"
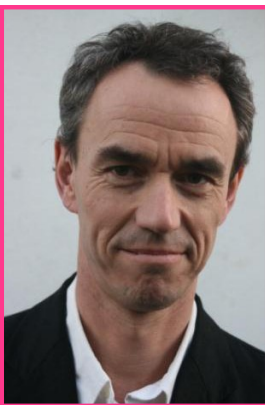
Paul Manners, Director of the National Co-ordinating Centre for Public Engagement, delivered a though-provoking keynote at the first think tank day which allowed us to further consider the idea of Public Engagement in its broadest terms. Paul considered the forms and challenges of interactions between universities and external groups, and emphasised the difficulty of pinning public engagement down to a single definition, suggesting that it may be better understood as an attitude towards learning and education based on a two-way process in which 'the activity and benefits of higher education and research can be shared with the public'. This raised the intriguing question 'who are "the public"?' and Paul shared with us some interesting visual representations of ways in which "the public" might be imagined.

The 'general public'

Communities of place

Communities of interest

Schools, colleges and lifelong learning

Community organisations and societies

Cultural and leisure services

Potential stakeholders or partners

Voluntary organisations and charities

Health and well being agencies

'Public sector '

Regional / national govt

NGOs

'Civil society'

Local authorities / strategic bodies

Social enterprises

Businesses

national
co-ordinating centre
for public engagement

Public engagement

Communities of place

Communities of interest

Schools, colleges and lifelong learning

Community organisations and societies

Cultural and leisure services

Civic engagement

Health and well being agencies

Potential stakeholders or partners

Voluntary organisations and charities

Community engagement

Regional / national govt

NGOs

Local authorities / strategic bodies

Social enterprises

Businesses

Business engagement

These sorts of models for conceptualising "the public" in its broader sense might perhaps help to identify those groups or individuals within it who have a particular interest in occupying a role as stakeholders or partners in public engagement projects with higher education institutions. Discussing the ways in which HEIs currently interact with various segments of "the public", Paul described a sliding scale of engagement which ranged from fairly one-way processes of informing at one end, to more genuinely two-way engagement of collaborating at the other. **Best practice in Higher Education public engagement will embody the principles of partnership prioritised at the collaborative end of this scale, with the 'engaged university' focusing on four key areas of public partnership, namely: public engagement with research; knowledge exchange and sharing; engaged teaching; and social responsibility.**

[Ed: These four key areas map onto researcher development as: Public Engagement with research and researcher skills, Knowledge Exchange and sharing, and training relevant to researchers and employers.]

Considering how - and, crucially, why - universities should

Interested in learning more?

Visit www.publicengagement.ac.uk A full copy of Paul's presentation is also available via the ASHPIT blog.

better adhere to these principles of public partnership and collaboration, Paul acknowledged that the culture within many HEIs is not currently always supportive of public engagement projects. In seeking to change this he urged participants to focus on communicating the benefits of public engagement to researchers and research institutions themselves, as well as to their external partners and stakeholders. Recognition, support and reward for those who do make public engagement central to their research were all, he said, key components in embedding engagement within Higher Education.

[Ed: Public engagement with cultural institutions is acknowledged and rewarded by the Times Higher Education awards for excellence and innovation in the Arts.]

Paul concluded by asking all participants to read and consider signing up to the Engaged University Manifesto as a means of expressing their strategic support for and belief in universities' and research institutes' responsibility to contribute to society through public engagement.

CASE STUDIES: Public Engagement Projects in Practice

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We invited participants in the first think tank day to submit proposals for a 15-minute presentation of a researcher development project associated with Public Engagement. We had a really good response and were presented with two excellent case studies. The highlights of those presentations have been summarised here by the speakers, along with the details of a third project which, though we weren't able to include it in the first think tank day, offers another example of how universities can offer public engagement opportunities to their research students.

Case Study One - Dr. Claire Stocks, University of Manchester: Humanities Faculty Researcher Showcase

The Humanities Faculty annual Researcher Showcase allows Research Students and Staff to present their research to peers, academics and the public. The Showcase initially began simply as a poster exhibition held at Manchester Museum, but over the last couple of years, researchers have been encouraged to prepare 'exhibitions' of their research, which centre around a poster but which can include streaming media, reflective journals, text, photos and other artefacts. As the Showcase has developed, greater thought has also gone into supporting researchers to develop a range of skills as they prepare and present their work. Preparation of the poster has always helped researchers to consider how their research can be presented visually, and the public engagement element of the event has also helped them to develop their oral presentation skills. Researchers have also had access to Graphic Design support and the Faculty has paid for the poster to be printed and laminated so that all participants are able to keep their poster for future events or simply to display in their departments. However, recent iterations of the Showcase have also demanded that participants identify their own potential audience, and invite them along to the day. This has encouraged researchers to think about the impact and potential of non-academic applications of their work, as well as how they might make their research interesting to people outside their discipline. Many researchers have successfully managed to build on the Showcase, using it to connect with local MPs and policy makers, using their poster to win competitions at other events, writing about their experience on Blogs or in Newsletters and creating electronic and paper leaflets of their posters to send to potential collaborators or to hand out at other events. Participants also report increased confidence as a result of the supportive comments received from other participants and members of the public.

"As the Showcase has developed, greater thought has also gone into supporting researchers to develop a range of skills."

Case Study Two: Dr Will May & Dr Laurie Stras, University of Southampton: Creativity & Community

Dr. Will May and Dr. Laurie Stras gave a presentation on public engagement training for postgraduate students in Humanities at the University of Southampton, focusing on Creative Writing. They outlined the existing centralised provision for training postgraduate and postdoctoral students in public engagement at the University, noted its science bias, and its preference for 'bolt-on' activities . Will described his own experience of undergoing this training as a postdoctoral research fellow, which resulted in a workshop entitled 'Thinking Outside the Books.' They then detailed plans to embed public engagement throughout their postgraduate provision in Humanities. They gave the example of the Creative Writing MA, which requires students to edit, publish and sell an anthology as part of their final project. This used to run as an on-campus activity, but they have now formed links with the New Forest Festival, and were launching the anthology alongside a series of literary events the students had organised with the local community. This gave students the opportunity to present their work to a large and varied audience, and experience of organising their own events under the umbrella of an independent arts festival. Will and Laurie suggested the importance of student-led engagement, and encouraging students to begin their own dialogues with external partners, institutions, or networks. Given the financial pressure on Humanities MAs throughout the sector, these types of engagement also proved cheaper, more flexible, and forged important links between universities and their local communities.

Student-led engagement is important for encouraging students to begin their own dialogues with external partners, institutions, or networks.

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Case Study Three - Richard Carruthers, University of Southampton:
PGR Internship Programme

The University of Southampton has been working with employers to help PGRs develop their career management skills and appreciate the broad range of careers options open to them on completing their doctorates.

The 'PGR Career Project' was launched in 2009 under the direction of Richard Carruthers; one of its objectives was to enhance provision for researchers within the Humanities and Social Sciences. The project provided a web resource (www.southampton.ac.uk/careers/pgr) enabling 24-hour access to all of our guidance materials and providing our PGR community with access to bespoke events, workshops and internships. At present the resource is receiving in excess of 2000 hits per week. Early in the project, a need was identified for the provision of more than just workshops and guidance information. Opportunities were developed to showcase the career pathways of our doctoral alumni and to

enable our PGRs to demonstrate their skills in a work-based environment. The output of this was the launch of a bespoke PGR internship programme providing PGRs with the opportunity to apply to work on projects impacting the long-term strategic goal of host organisations. The successful PGRs are mentored through the project to develop their skills within a business environment and deliver to the hosts' expectations. To date, the internship programme has placed researchers on projects ranging from business development reviews to statistical/financial analysis. Feedback from PGRs and host organisations has been positive, encouraging other external organisations to engage with our PGR community via internships, workshops, networking events and attendance at our bespoke PGR Careers Fair.

> Further information on all the project work undertaken at the University of Southampton can be sought from the project manager, Richard Carruthers. R.J.Carruthers@soton.ac.uk

A new public engagement project?

> *"One of the goals of the ASHPIT network is to facilitate collaborative proposals."*

ASHPIT's goal is to make collaborative proposals easier and allow us to respond innovatively to the changing picture at policy level and the challenges of the new funding landscape. As such, participants in the first Think Tank day used the afternoon session to work in three groups on ideas for new Public Engagement ventures which might potentially be implemented after the event. The ideas the groups came up with are all summarised on the ASHPIT blog, but one of these has already provoked particular interest, with a number of people contacting us to ask how they can take part. This was group two's "Masterclass", **a project which they envisaged offering high-end training in public engagement to research staff and postgraduate research students with some existing experience of public engagement and a solid grasp of more basic skills training such as presentation skills or public speaking.**
Accordingly, the masterclass would instead offer **generic training and advice from a panel of expert practitioners of**

public engagement. This panel could be varied to allow for multiple iterations of the session, each with a slightly different focus in terms of the audience with whom participants hoped to connect. The group suggested that **panelists might include** (although not necessarily on the same panel): **journalists, professionals from the museums and heritage sectors, National Trust staff involved with public engagement, academic publishers, specialist librarians, politicians and policy-makers, NGOs, representatives of community groups,** and so on. **The 'legacies' of the project would include the production of an Action Learning Set and development of networks** both of research professionals interested in public engagement within HEIs, and of researchers and professionals from the external bodies represented on the panels. In addition, the group suggested that the masterclass sessions themselves could be filmed and made available online to produce another Reusable Learning Object. We should stress that this project is, at present, still very much in its nascent stage.
If anyone has any ideas about how it might be further developed, or would like to play a more active role in actually getting it up and running, please do get in contact with us either at ashpit@nottingham.ac.uk or via the blog:

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ARTS, SOCIAL SCIENCES & HUMANITIES POLICY IMPLEMENTATION THINKTANK

Join us for the next ASHPIT think tank day

The next think tank day will take place on **Friday 15th April** at the **University of Oxford** and will focus on the theme of **Entrepreneurship**. If you would like to attend, please send an email registering your interest to:
ashpit@nottingham.ac.uk by Friday 25th February.

It would be useful to know in advance what ASHPIT members are doing in the field of Entrepreneurship training. Please do **e-mail and let us know.**

Do you have a better idea of the ways in which we can embed public engagement into the researcher development agenda?

You may be interested in joining us to pursue funding for a collaborative bid. Although the current economic crisis has meant that certain funding streams have been withdrawn, two main funders remain:

Awards for All (National Lottery grants scheme) which funds small, local community-based projects in the UK; and
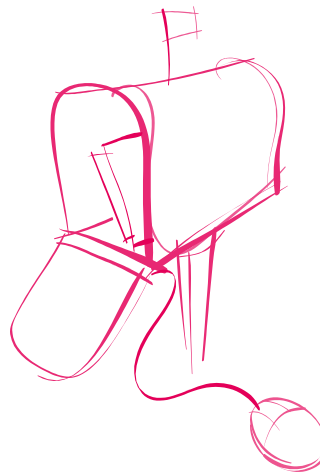*Paul Hamlyn Foundation*, an independent grant-making organisation focusing on the arts, education and social justice.

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About us

ASHPIT was set up and is run by Dr Rebekah Smith McGloin and Sarah Kerr. We are researcher developers, based in the Arts Graduate Centre at the University of Nottingham.   We are supported by the hard work of a postgraduate intern, Rachel Middlemass.

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